CLAIMS

1. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:

receiving a stream of data from a server via a network;

rendering the stream of data at a first playback speed; and

switching to rendering the stream of data at a second playback speed different than the first playback speed without a user-detectable break between the rendering at the first playback speed and the rendering at the second playback speed.

2. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the stream of data comprises a composite media stream including a video stream and an audio stream.

3. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the second playback speed is faster than the first playback speed.

4. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the computer-executable instructions are further for performing a step comprising receiving a user selection identifying the second playback speed, and wherein the switching comprises switching to rendering the stream of data at the second playback speed in response to the user selection.

5. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the receiving comprises receiving the stream of data at a rate faster than necessary in order to aggressively refill a client data buffer.

6. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the switching comprises immediately beginning rendering the stream of data at the second playback speed as soon as a request to change to the second playback speed is received.

7. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the computer-executable instructions are further for performing a step comprising receiving the stream of data as a plurality of data packets, and wherein each of the plurality of data packets includes a tag identifying whether it was transferred for the first playback speed or for the second playback speed.

8. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 7, wherein the computer-executable instructions are further for performing a step comprising rendering the stream of data at either the first playback speed or the second playback speed based on the tags of the plurality of data packets.

9. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 7, wherein the computer-executable instructions are further for performing a step comprising performing time-scale modification of the data stream in accordance with the playback speed identified by the tags of the plurality of data packets.

10. A method comprising:

rendering a first stream of data; and

switching to rendering a second stream of data at a different playback speed than the first stream of data without a user-detectable break between the first and second streams.

11. A method as recited in claim 10, wherein:

the first stream comprises a composite stream including a first video data stream and a first audio data stream; and

the second stream comprises a composite stream including a second video data stream and a second audio data stream.

12. A method as recited in claim 10, further comprising:

continuing to receive and render the first stream of data until the second stream of data is received; and

switching to rendering the second stream of data as soon as the second stream of data is received.

13. At least one computer-readable memory containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 10.

14. A method comprising:

transmitting, to a client, media content corresponding to a first speed;

receiving, from the client, a request for the media content at a second speed;

providing the media content to the client at the first speed while locating a correct position in a new data stream corresponding to the media content at the second speed at which to begin transmitting the media content at the second speed; and

transmitting, to the client, the media content corresponding to the second speed after the correct position in the data stream is located.

15. A method as recited in claim 14, wherein the transmitting the media content corresponding to the first speed and the transmitting the media content corresponding to the second speed comprise transmitting the media content to the client via a network.

16. A method as recited in claim 14, wherein the media content includes audio data and video data.

17. A method as recited in claim 14, further comprising:

the client receiving the media content; and

the client rendering the media content at the first speed if the media content corresponding to the first speed is received, otherwise the client rendering the media content at the second speed.

18. At least one computer-readable memory containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 14.

19. A system comprising:

a client;

a server coupled to the client;

wherein the client is to,

play back a media stream at a current speed,

receive a request to change the playback speed to a new speed,

transmit an indication of the new speed to the server, and

begin playing back the media stream at the new speed; and

wherein the server is to,

receive the indication of the new speed from the client, and

alter the speed at which it transfers the media stream to the client, overcompensating for the new speed.

20. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the server is coupled to the client via the Internet.

21. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the media stream includes both an audio data stream and a video data stream.

22. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the client is further to begin playing back the media stream at the new speed without a user-detectable break between the playing back of the media stream at the current speed and the playing back of the media stream at the new speed.

23. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the client is further to receive, as the request to change the playback speed, a user selection of the new speed.

24. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the client is further to provide a graphical user interface via which a user can input the request to change the playback speed.

25. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the server is to overcompensate for the new speed by sending the media stream at a rate faster than necessary in order to quickly refill a data buffer at the client.

26. A system as recited in claim 19, wherein the client is further to immediately beginning playing back the media stream at the new speed as soon as a request to change to the new speed is received.

27. A system comprising:

a client;

a server coupled to the client;

wherein the client is to,

render a media stream at a speed at which the media stream is tagged,

receive a request to change the rendering speed to a new speed, and

transmit an indication of the new speed to the server; and

wherein the server is to,

stream the media stream to the client,

receive the indication of the new speed from the client,

alter the speed at which it transfers the media stream to the client, and

tag portions of the media stream streamed to the client prior to the altering with an indication of a previous speed, and tag portions of the media stream streamed to the client after the altering with an indication of the new speed.

28. A system as recited in claim 27, wherein the server is coupled to the client via the Internet.

29. A system as recited in claim 27, wherein the media stream includes both an audio data stream an a video data stream.

30. A system as recited in claim 27, wherein the server is further to stream the media stream to the client as a series of data packets, each data packet including a tag identifying whether it corresponds to the previous speed or the new speed.

31. A system as recited in claim 27, wherein the server is further to perform time-scale modification of the media stream prior to streaming the media stream to the client.

32. A system as recited in claim 27, wherein the client is further to perform time-scale modification of the media stream prior to rendering the media stream.

33. A system as recited in claim 32, wherein the client is to perform the time-scale modification to alter the speed at which the media stream is rendered based on the tags.